

END REPORT

ICT LEARNING IN ADULTS OVER 50 YEARS OLD IN EUROPEAN RURAL AREAS



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1. PROJECT BACKGROUND

Education and training are decisive factors in achieving economic growth, increased competitiveness and social inclusion. Adult learning in this context, apart from contributing to personal development and achievement, is having an increasingly important role in national reform programmes in all European countries. However, the actual application of these programmes continues to be far from sufficient. The majority of education and training systems continue to focus on educating and training young people, and progress made to change the system to take into account lifelong learning needs has been limited.

To reach the participation rate of the quota established by the Member States of the European Union within the framework of the programme “Education and Training 2010”, four million adults need to have participated in lifelong learning by 2010.

Recent research has shown the importance of investing in adult learning. Some of the advantages are improved employability, increased productivity, and increased social advantages thanks to an improvement in active citizenship and a higher level of well-being and personal achievement.

Research on adults over 18 indicate that adults who participate in learning activities stay healthier, contributing to a reduction in healthcare expenses. Adult education has not always received the attention that it deserves as regards visibility, political support and resources. The divergence between policies and reality becomes further evident when we look at the fundamental challenges that arise in the various countries. In this context, the E-learning programme from the European Union promotes projects and research on the subject area to help improve awareness about the situation and create an integration methodology for ICT that facilitates the digital inclusion process. The project *Living Memory* came about under this context.

The main objective of the *Living Memory* project was to study the learning process involved with Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for adults over 50 years old, who live in rural parts of Europe and have difficulty accessing these technologies, due to their geographic or their socio-economic situation.

The Education Area of the Barcelona Provincial Council has led the project and has been responsible for managing and coordinating it. The project has also seen the participation of public and private institutions from four different countries: Poland, Sweden, Austria and Spain.

2. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the project was to identify the digital literacy experiences of adults over 50 years old living in rural areas, and to determine the learning methodologies used. To achieve this end, the following specific objectives were defined:

1. Identify ICT learning projects for adult persons over 50 years old who live in rural areas.
2. Establish a Europe-wide conceptual framework on digital literacy for adults over 50 years of age who live in rural areas.
3. Identify, evaluate and disseminate the best practices of the projects and the methodologies identified.
4. Identify the abilities and essential skills of adult persons over 50 years old who live in rural areas in learning Information and Communication Technologies.
5. Disseminate, using a project website, the contents, tools and products resulting from the project as widely as possible around Europe.
6. Promote the creation of a network of rural municipalities in Europe to share strategies that will help adults over 50 years old to learn ICTs.
7. Promote actions that ensure project sustainability.

3. PROJECT STAGES AND METHODOLOGY

The project has been divided into three main stages (see figure 1): identifying practices, selecting the most relevant experiences for the study, and finally, analysing the work methodologies and taking a pedagogic approach to the experiences analysed.

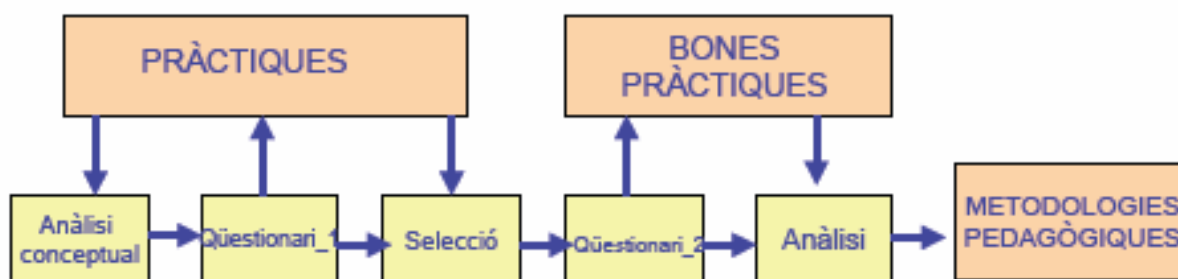


Figure 1. Project Stages

At the start of the project, a common reference vocabulary among members was established with the aim of having a common work referent while, at the same time, reflecting the differences between the various participating regions. In some cases, the project team decided to use the definitions that the European Union had already adopted (as is the case for the definition of the concept “e-learning” or “competence” which is outlined in the European Union directives on this matter). In other cases, concepts have been defined on a more local basis, given that there are clear differences between members of the project. For instance, as rural areas are established differently between countries, each one has been adjusted to the definition specific to its territory.

The members’ contributions enabled an end proposal to be created which was grouped by subject area ¹ (see table 1).

¹ The definitions of the different terms can be consulted in Living Memory (2007) “Report I. General Framework Concerning Digital Literacy for People over 50 years of age in European Rural Areas”. [online] [Consulted on 11 December 2007] Available at: <http://www.living-memory.net/docsBiblioteca/carpeta270/20070717REPORT1_MEVA_ENG_corr.pdf>

Table 1. Proposal adopted for the project

Concepts relating to	Terminology
PERSONS	Dependent persons Financial difficulties Adult persons Independent persons Social difficulties Cultural diversity
TERRITORY	Region Rural areas Geographical difficulties
TRANS-NATIONAL MANAGEMENT OF THE PROJECT	Analysis Best practice Evaluation Experience exchange Framework Innovation Work network Project Programme Package Project sustainability
DIGITAL LITERACY	Digital literacy ICT Communities of practice IT skills Digital division e-inclusion or digital inclusion e-accessibility Geographic inclusion

EDUCATION	Lifelong learning Knowledge Requisite capabilities or skills Methodologies Didactic methodology Tools Expert Teacher Trainer Tutor Facilitator e-learning
COMPETENCES	Key competences Mathematical competence and basic competence in science and technology Digital competence Social and civic competence Mother-tongue communication Foreign-language communication Learning how to learn Initiative and enterprise Cultural awareness and expression:

From this common conception framework, the first stage of the project started, identifying the programmes or projects being carried out that involved learning Information and Communication Technologies, using, among others, the Internet for investigation, communication, dissemination and construction of virtual networks for adult persons over 50 years who have difficulties in accessing these technologies due to their geographic position or their social or economic situation, given that this study focused on rural contexts.

Obtaining information on experiences using ICT in the project's target population has not been easy. Firstly, the type of information was not readily available since often, experiences were dispersed and were not always formalised and accessible. Another problem that we encountered was that there were many ICT-use experiences in rural contexts, however it was not always easy to separate experiences that focused on adults over 50 years of age from general type activities aimed at the young etc. As a result, in order to identify the projects, various sources were used:

- Prior knowledge from participation in other projects.
- Research through search engines and specialised bibliography.
- Direct contact with a local partner.
- Other information sources: the press, television programmes, Internet, etc.

Once possible experiences and projects were identified in each country, a questionnaire was created to collect information on basic aspects.

- 1- Information relating to the project's promoting body: type of body/entity, number of people working on the project, objectives and main activities involved.
- 2- Information relating to the project: objectives, number of people involved, results obtained, tools created, type of funding, etc.
- 3- Information relating to territory and the target groups: number of participants, age, geographic location, etc.

The first questionnaire was used to make a first selection of projects and experiences. The second questionnaire was sent to only those projects that fell within the target group defined for the project. The main objective of this second questionnaire was to find out more information about the methodology used in the different projects and experiences. Later, it was found that an in-depth analysis of the project was required, so members visited the projects and spoke directly to the person responsible for the project. Based on the results obtained, a number of analysis criteria were agreed on which have allowed to make a comparison of experiences and draw up the conclusions of the study.

4. RESULTS FROM THE SELECTION OF EXPERIENCES

From all the experiences selected, those that were directly linked to the target collective of our investigation were selected: More specifically, those experiences that had a clear involvement of ICT, and where the participants were adults over 50 years of age in rural areas. Experiences that involved an improvement in key competences for citizens with a clear educational content were also considered.

The people responsible for the projects selected received a second questionnaire which aimed to study in greater depth the information received in the first questionnaire. A fourth part related to methodology was added to determine how the participants were chosen for the project, what strategies had been used for motivating the target public, what was the profile of the trainers training adult persons over the age of 50, which didactic methodologies they used, etc.

4.1. Indicators for analysing experiences

The information obtained through the second questionnaire enabled an analysis to be made of the various selected experiences and projects. To achieve this task, several indicators were established that allowed the analysis and comparison of the various practices. For each criterion, a scale from 1 to 4 was devised to allow the degree of application to be determined for each of the indicators.

Table 2. Indicators for analysing experiences

Analysis indicators	Description
ICTs as a learning base	ICTs as a support tool in learning key competences.
Transferability	Experience can be transferred to other territories.
Methodological innovation	Innovative methodology (rural areas, adults)
Impact on the territory	Experience gives an added value to the citizens of the municipality.
Sustainability	Maintenance at short and medium term.
Digital inclusion	Favours digital inclusion of adult persons over 50 years of age in disadvantaged situations (immigrant population, women, etc.)

The analysis indicators and levels proposed are as follows.

1. ICTs as a learning base

A differentiation was established between experiences making use of ICTs as the main learning objective and those using technologies as a support tool for learning.

A difference was also made between a *technological literacy* that aims at functional learning of a specific IT programme or system (using e-mail, digital photography programs, etc.) and another that uses *ICTs as a support tool* for acquiring key competences. In this sense, the European Parliament and European Council's recommendations on key competences for lifelong learning were taken as a reference.²

2. Transferability

The transferability criteria referred to the ease with which the experience chosen could be transferred and adapted to other realities (municipalities and/or territories). These criteria were proposed for application, taking into account aspects relating to technological resources and also to training aspects.

3. Methodological innovation

Methodological innovation was considered to be the way that ICTs were used by people over 50 years old and in rural areas. In that case, special emphasis was put on providing experiences which used methodologies adapted to the population and the territory.

4. Impact on the territory

Impact on the territory referred to the influence that the experience had as an additional social value for citizens of the municipality or territory where it was taking place.

5. Sustainability

It was important to analyse whether the experiences selected were only immediately relevant projects or could be maintained for a time by adapting them with external and internal modifications. These criteria were not always easy to apply with the information taken from the questionnaires.

6. Digital inclusion

² Recommendation of the European Parliament and Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/CE). Official Journal of the European Union, 30/12/2006 I. 394/10-18

The project's target population was particularly susceptible to digital-exclusion processes. For that reason, it was important to analyse the actions undertaken in the practices selected in order to determine the presence of actions aimed towards digital inclusion.

4.2 Comparative of the analysis indicators between different countries

The results obtained at a qualitative level were broken down into the following comparative tables³

Table 3. Comparison of experiences

INDICATOR	▪ ICTs as a learning base
Austria	Projects focus on training in the use of ICT in order to refresh knowledge and increase employability.
Spain	There are many differences throughout the State, but in the majority of projects, the use of ICTs is not as an end in itself, but rather a support tool in learning other competences.
Poland	Experiences focus on basic digital literacy courses, having as an objective the functional learning of a specific program or IT system.
Sweden	In the majority of projects, the use of ICTs is as a support for learning other competences.

³ At a quantitative level, tables can be found on the webpage of the project Living Memory (2007) [online] [Consulted 11 December 2007] Available at: < http://www.living-memory.net/docsBiblioteca/carpeta50/2_3_Analysis_experiences.pdf>

Table 4. Comparison of experiences

INDICATOR	▪ Transferability
Austria	In general, the projects are transferable.
Spain	<p>Some experiences – Callús and Asturias – are transferable due to good methodology and adaptation to the environment. These experiences are also widely documented and hence, help transferability.</p> <p>However, the reliability of its transferability cannot always be evaluated using the data obtained from the questionnaires.</p>
Poland	In general, the projects are transferable.
Sweden	In general, the projects are transferable.

Table 5. Comparison of experiences

INDICATOR	▪ Methodological innovation
Austria	The innovative methodology is good and it has changed from a personalised learning type (“face to face”) to a group learning type. Motivation of the participants is high since they are able to see the usefulness of the course contents in their daily life.
Spain	<p>There are many differences in the various experiences; there are some noteworthy local experiences with methodological innovations.</p> <p>A specific training methodology has not always been found; rather, the methodology has been adapted to the adult population.</p>
Poland	The training methodology has been adapted to the adult population.
Sweden	The resulting experiences are highly innovative as regards the organisation and methodology applied. Due to this, the people are more motivated. Methodological innovation is highly important in Sweden. Methodologies must arise from the needs of the users and must take their motivations into account.

Table 6. Comparison of experiences

INDICATOR	▪ Impact on the territory
Austria	One of the problems found in the experiences is the impact on the territory. Since the participants are surrounded by high mountains, mobility by road, especially in winter, makes access to training difficult. For this reason, network activities are highly important.
Spain	<p>There are large and well organised projects covering a wide territorial area at Autonomous Community level – Red de Telecentros de Asturias, Centros Guadalinfo de Andalucía and Nuevos Centros de Conocimiento de Extremadura.</p> <p>There are other local initiative projects with a high impact on the territory.</p>
Poland	Low impact on the territory.
Sweden	Territorial impact is a problem in Sweden; it depends greatly on the target group of the experience.

Table 7. Comparison of experiences

INDICATOR	▪ Sustainability
Austria	Users must participate in the sustainability of the project. In Austria, a course that is free loses its value.
Spain	<p>There are many differences throughout the State.</p> <p>As regards sustainability, it cannot always be evaluated reliably using the data obtained from the questionnaires.</p>
Poland	The projects are authority initiatives, since the users would have to financially contribute to the project sustainability, and elderly people cannot afford it.
	Different institutions participate in the projects in order to make

Sweden	them sustainable.
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Table 8. Comparison of experiences

INDICATOR	▪ Digital inclusion
Austria	Minority groups have not been involved in the actual activities.
Spain	Minority groups have not been involved in the actual activities.
Poland	In order to include the target population and motivate their participation, the course needed to be free since the elderly population and population living in rural areas have little financial resources, salaries are low and they would prefer to stay at home and receive the financial aid from the Public Administration.
Sweden	It can be considered to be quite high. In Sweden, there are four ethnic minority groups (from Somalia, Bangladesh, Iran and Eritrea) who have been following the project, but do not have their own ICT literacy activities for elderly people. For this reason, it has not been possible to involve them more closely in the project.

All the projects analysed were examples of best practices with innovative methodologies for motivation and learning. The innovative methodologies were very different in each country.

In the vast majority of the projects, the use of Information and Communication Technologies was not the primary aim, but rather as a basis for learning other skills. However, the differences in experiences between the countries were highly important.

Minority groups were not involved in the actual activities in any of the countries which proved to be one of the weak points of the project. This was partly due to the current situation: minority groups generally do not live in rural areas. However, what is true is that we currently have a culturally diverse society with

people from different cultures and ethnics in all the old member states of the European Union.

In the case of Poland, the economic situation of the country made it difficult to carry out experiences aimed at the adult population, and essentially, they were focused on basic digital literacy courses. The course needs to be free in order to motivate adults. The rural population does not have money, salaries are low and they would prefer to stay at home and receive financial aid from the Public Administration. Elderly people have little financial resources.

As for Austria, one of the problems was the impact on the territory as a result of being surrounded by high mountains. Distances may only be 5 kilometres, but getting there may mean travelling 50 kilometres. Road mobility, especially in winter, complicates access to training, and for this reason, network activities were of vital importance. The projects identified in Austria focused on training in the use of ICT in order to refresh knowledge and improve employability. The innovative methodology was good and it had changed from a personalised learning type (“face to face”) to a group learning type. Motivation of the participants was high since they were able to see the usefulness of the course contents in their daily life. In Austria, a course that is free loses its value.

In Sweden, the resulting experiences were highly innovative as regards the organisation and methodology applied. The innovative methodology was an asset. The situation has changed in the last ten years, as well as the methodology. Nowadays, people are more motivated which is essential to adapt the methodologies to the learner. Methodological innovation is highly important in Sweden. Methodologies must arise from the needs of the users and must take into account their motivations. The problem was that territorial impact depended greatly on the target group involved.

In the Spanish State, there were many differences in the following analysis criteria: use of the ICTs, methodological innovation and sustainability. All the projects analysed were examples of best practices. There were certain aspects (especially those related to transferability and sustainability), which although they are vitally important, could not be verified using the data obtained from the questionnaires. In the majority of projects, the use of ICTs was not an end in itself, rather a support for learning other competences. A specific training methodology was not always found, rather a methodology that was adapted to the adult population. In this sense, the adapted methodologies did not always prove innovative given that there were no specific adaptations to the users’ typology (adults over the age of 50). Some experiences – Callús and Asturias – were transferable due to good methodology and adaptation to the environment. These experiences were also well documented.

Two different types of experiences were found. Firstly, large-scale projects with a wide territorial coverage (at Autonomous Community level) – Red de Telecentros de Asturias, Centros Guadalinfo de Andalucía and Nuevos Centros de Conocimiento de Extremadura – and local initiatives that had a high impact on the territory and notable methodological innovations. In general, some

experiences were transferable due to good methodology and adaptation to the environment.

5. RESULTS FROM THE ANALYSIS OF METHODOLOGY

From the projects identified, the next stage of the project began, focusing on analysing the methodologies used in the learning of ICTs. In this case, each member went personally to all the entities and bodies contacted in order to determine the experiences previously identified in greater depth.

In order to collect homogenous information from all the participants, a consensus was reached on the main questions to be asked when visiting the entities identified.⁴ These questions dealt with: pedagogic awareness strategies for participation, the diffusion of ICT centre activities, detecting and working according to the participants' training needs, the role of the facilitator as an agent who is aware of the participants' diversity, resources provided by the centre, the type of course offer made and whether certification is given, the methods of participation and communication with the centre, and whether modules are used in learning ICTs, among other questions.

From the different issues dealt with, the following section focuses on the methodological aspects and the learner support aspects which have a more usual usage level.

Pedagogical strategies to motivate and create awareness

For experiences in Catalonia, Asturias, Extremadura, Andalucia and Aragon, no single method was used to motivate adults to participate in using ICTs. Different actions needed to be established which combined diffusion processes and direct actions with the target group.

Diffusion took place through diverse channels: Digital TV, course announcements, website etc.

The different agents of lifelong training (libraries, adult learning schools etc.) were also very effective in carrying out direct actions. In many cases, the projects combined strategies which used information and direct actions with the target group. In rural areas, direct access to the target group was more effective and possible.

In Sweden, the demand for ICT in daily life has grown greatly in the last decade and awareness about ICT has grown in society. No one can ignore the situation

⁴ The questions posed can be consulted in Living Memory (2007) "Report II. Pedagogical Methodologies of ICT Learning Projects for People Over 50 Years Old in European Rural Areas". [on-line] [Consulted on 11 December 2007]

Available at: http://www.living-memory.net/docsBiblioteca/carpeta111/20071019Report_II.pdf

For the Spanish State, a final question on the use of face-to-face, distance and blending methodology for learning projects for people over 50 years old was added.

nowadays. For many years, attitudes have been influenced by this growing demand and the widespread marketing carried out in Swedish society about the advantages that learning ICTs brings.

In Austria, there was no one way to motivate the target group to participate in the courses. It was focused on using two different ways. The first part of the target group was sent by the Austrian employment service as an investigation into a new work. Their motivation was often low, depending on the difficulty in finding work. At times, they were motivated by their own success, or that of their colleagues, by finding a job or solving problems with ICTs. The second part of the target group took the voluntary decision to do the course in order to expand their knowledge of ICTs. It was likely that they will use this new knowledge in their daily life or in their hobbies, but not to find work.

In Poland, the main strategy was to show people that they can communicate with others using different technologies. Hence, they were encouraged to learn how to use computers and programmes easily.

Detecting interests and needs of the target population

For experiences in Catalonia, Asturias, Extremadura, Andalucia and Aragon, the opinions of participants were taken into account as it was extremely important to adapt the courses and activities to the interests and needs of the adult persons. However, very often, the target group did not have a clear idea about what they wanted to learn about ICTs.

In Sweden, different associations used various methods. Adult education is free for everyone, but not all users go there to get a study plan and certification. Courses were adapted as much as possible; however, it did not prove to be easy. In other associations, many users came to them since they used bottom-up methods and modularisation.

In Austria, a planning of courses according to the demands of adults was offered; however, often the contents were not very clear. Before each course, personal interviews were carried out to determine the content of each course.

In Poland, the opinions of the participants were taken into account as otherwise, the courses would not be organised.

Didactic methodologies most used

- Blended learning (distance and face-to-face teaching)
- E-learning (given sporadically)
- Individual support
- Organised meetings
- Productive learning: learning aimed at achieving a desired product
- Shared learning using work groups
- Virtual work – virtual learning communities
- Group dynamics
- Work by interests or projects

Tools, resources or materials and distance learning methods

For experiences in Catalonia, Asturias, Extremadura, Andalucia and Aragon, the support materials created for adults were very diverse: a group of materials aimed at self-learning (CD-ROM, video cassettes, audio cassettes etc.) and, on rare occasions, intranet used as support for communication between participants.

Video-conference was used in some projects in order to bring people closer, to make them participate and learn from one another despite being from other towns, cities etc.

In Sweden, distance learning (video course, CD instructions etc.) was not very frequent. Adult persons needed someone to accompany them and needed face-to-face learning with a facilitator to acquire basic skills. They also needed someone that they could call when working on their own.

In Austria, various means of communication were used in adult education. The means used depended on the level of previous knowledge. E-learning courses could only be used by students who had already started as they already knew how to use the computer. The first step in e-learning courses was to explain to the user that he/ she is capable of using a computer. They also used books, CD-ROM, audio cassettes, videos, synchronic and asynchronic communication (like SKYPE, e-mail, forums etc.)

In Poland, the ICT learning materials were very diverse: CD-ROM, computer games, internet, audio cassettes, but mostly, manuals.

The role of the facilitator in the process

Facilitators help the learners to solve problems in daily life.

They watch how learners work and which methods they choose. They must have professional qualifications in ICT learning.

In many projects, the facilitator coordinated with other facilitators in the municipalities to save on resources.

In all the experiences found in the different countries, the facilitator played a key role in the whole process. Their actions towards the participants, both on an individual and a collective level, depended on whether they could respond to the needs and interests of the participants; as regards both the introduction, and the training interests of the participants and monitoring throughout the learning process. The facilitator played a key part in motivating and building the self-esteem of the people who were starting the digital literacy process.

They promoted motivation and participation, stimulating new group projects like the historical archive of the municipality, leisure activities, cooking, sport, etc.

Participants used the computer directly with the help of the facilitator according to the course objective, the initiative proposed etc.

Types of learning activities

In the experiences studied, we have found:

- Initiatives: humanitarian, inter-generational, competitions
- Workshops: cultural recovery
- Information and communication
- Courses and dissemination
- Tele-training
- Open Space
- Electronic Services: e-administration
- Activities for entrepreneurs

5.1 Methodology analysis indicators

Having looked at the diverse experiences of digital literacy, a number of indicators needed to be determined in order to analyse the reality of the situation that each member found in their territory, regarding the methodology used.

The analysis indicators used were the following:

Analysis indicators	Description
Dissemination of the centre's activities	Evaluate whether the activities carried out in the centre are communicated to the population in such a way as to best capture participants.
Work according to needs	Analyse whether the activity programme takes into account the different interests and demands of the population.
Group work	Evaluate whether it promotes group work so that individuals collaborate in the same project to promote social skills (social protagonism and sense of belonging to the society in which they live, commitment to the territory, town/city...)
Attention to diversity	Evaluate whether it takes into account and answers the different rates of learning, different motivations and interests of the participants in the different situations of teaching-learning.
Involvement of the facilitator	Evaluate whether the facilitator becomes involved in the whole project (spreads information, is receptive, plans according to the learning needs and interests of the individuals, and monitors the people involved). The facilitator should detect the needs throughout the teaching-learning process (from start to finish). The facilitator has a fundamental role in group work as regards motivation, ability to listen, etc.
Course certification	Describe whether an official certification is given at the end of an initiative, workshop, course etc. which demonstrates attendance and achievement in the course.

5.2 Comparative of the analysis indicators between different countries.

The results obtained were broken down into the following comparative tables:

Table 4. Comparison of methodologies

INDICATOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dissemination of the centre's activities
Austria	<p>The results of the identified projects are disseminated using bulletins, local press and by organising informative sessions.</p> <p>In addition, new groups on different subjects are organised and the results of the projects are announced on the local pages.</p> <p>One of the most effective methods used for spreading information is face-to-face communication.</p>
Spain	<p>From the experiences analysed, information is spread using a number of channels: press, radio, local television, etc. In all cases, the most efficient aspect is the communication between the participants themselves on the different activities.</p> <p>For example, in Callús, there is a monthly agenda of activities which is distributed to everyone in the town; a notice with the agenda is hung in the shops, notice-boards, town hall, telecentre, school. There is also an agenda of activities, courses, seminars and other on the municipal web agenda.</p>
Poland	<p>News of the activities is spread by the adults, who talk about new initiatives to other people. The centres publish information in the local newspapers however it does not have a wide reach. To find out about the centres, you need to ask the residents.</p>
Sweden	<p>In Sweden, the results, the first report, the prospects and the best practices have been disseminated to everyone involved and also in the two regional seminars, one in Västervik and the</p>

	other in Norrtälje. The information has been sent to approximately 250 key people throughout the country.
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Table 5. Comparison of methodologies

INDICATOR	▪ Work according to needs
Austria	The projects are applied and developed according to the needs of the municipality and the public authorities. The results of the project fulfil the needs of the target group.
Spain	<p>The experiences found all have as a common point the activity proposal according to the needs detected. Activities proposed are those that are significant for the adults based on their experiences.</p> <p>There are both individual and group offerings. The demands are made using various agents in the territory (financial, educational and social) and are made to measure according to needs or specific demands detected in the territory.</p> <p>For example, in the <i>Botiga d'aprenentatge</i> in Vilafranca, the demand is at individual level. The individual arrives to the shop, having made an appointment and the facilitator detects the needs according to the personal project of each one.</p>
Poland	The activities of the centres are carried out according to the needs of the local users. If a computer course is suggested, the local authorities publicise this proposal and bring the people interested together. The courses are usually free as the users do not have sufficient financial resources. Apart from computer courses, people want to participate in other types of courses such as language courses, marketing or occupational courses.

<p>Sweden</p>	<p>In Sweden, needs have always had an important role in planning ICT basic skills courses. For this reason, many courses have a bottom-up profile.</p> <p>In this project, it has been important to create awareness about the similarities in users' demands in order to motivate groups of people from different countries, for example, personal history experiences. It might be a way to work with groups of immigrants.</p>
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Table 6. Comparison of methodologies

<p>INDICATOR</p>	<p>▪ Group work</p>
<p>Austria</p>	<p>Some of the projects identified promote group work in order to reinforce communication between members of the target group using different communication channels which include the possibilities that ICT brings, such as e-mail, new groups and forums.</p>
<p>Spain</p>	<p>Not all the experiences promote group work. The experience of Telecentres de Asturias is the most significant in this respect.</p> <p>The telecentre promotes participation via organisations (groups, associations) from the local and regional community. It attempts to create an individual and group commitment using the activities of the telecentres.</p> <p>The telecentre has become a reference point in the whole territory, for example, Asturias, Extremadura or Andalusia.</p>
	<p>One of the basic work methods is promoted by group courses.</p>

Poland	There are hardly any individual courses, not even paid courses. The courses organised in local areas are free of charge and are aimed at a group of people.
Sweden	Normally, courses are offered for groups, not for individuals.

Table 7. Comparison of methodologies

INDICATOR	▪ Attention to diversity
Austria	The ICT course offering is done according to the needs and requirements of the target group. The methodologies used are the following: individual learning, work groups, e-learning, blended learning and project work. Each of the methodologies must be related to their daily life.
Spain	There is a systematic offering for groups, but also, in many of the experiences, individuals can go directly to the centre and make a specific request (for example, Asturias, Andalusia, Extremadura). Based on the demands, the facilitators design the activities and use the most suitable technological tools adapted to the users and their knowledge and skills.
Poland	There are a number of different courses on offer according to needs. The most popular is IT and language, however there are many people with different needs, and different courses are organised.
Sweden	Associations use this method as their system. They must listen to the demands, and the activities are designed as a result.

	The same system is used in study circles in Popular Adult Education.
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Table 8. Comparison of methodologies

INDICATOR	▪ Involvement of facilitator
Austria	Facilitators have an important role in the courses. They are not only involved in the development of the course but also in motivating adults. They must be realistic and know that some areas of ICT cannot be used in their daily life. One of the most important issues in the role of the facilitator is building trust between themselves and the users, especially if sent by the Austrian Employment Service.
Spain	<p>The facilitators are a fundamental element of the experiences. They must work throughout the process accompanying the adults. From when they detect the training needs until the end product.</p> <p>The facilitators encourage motivation and must encourage participation and drive new projects based on local interests.</p>
Poland	A facilitator is a person with pedagogical and methodological qualifications. They must be able to help the learner at any stage. The facilitator must encourage users to obtain the skills.
Sweden	The role of the facilitator aims to help solve problems with ICTs.

Table 9. Comparison of methodologies

INDICATOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Course certification
Austria	<p>In Austria, there are two ways of obtaining certification:</p> <p>for people over 60 years of age, certificates are offered but since they do not need them for employment, normally they answer negatively when asked whether they want them; for people between 50 and 60, certificates are useful for their profession.</p>
Spain	<p>Course certification is not always given; however, often it can help increase participants' motivation.</p> <p>Many agents do not have the necessary accreditation to give out certificates.</p>
Poland	<p>Once the course has been completed, learners always receive a certificate which proves their acquisition of new competencies.</p>
Sweden	<p>It depends on the organisation. Adult Education gives a real certificate. Some give diplomas without any assessment and others do not give any certification. If the person is looking for work, having a diploma may be an advantage. However, people over 75 who learn how to pay bills, reserve tickets, and communicate with their family, do not need any certification for having acquired these skills.</p>

As can be seen, in the majority of experiences analysed, information was spread using a number of channels: press, radio, local television, etc. In all cases, the most efficient aspect was communication between the participants themselves on the different activities.

Some of the projects promoted group work in order to reinforce communication between members of the target group using different communication channels which included the possibilities that ICT brings, such as e-mail and forums.

However, in general, the activities of the centres were carried out according to the needs of the local users. Training is usually free as the users do not have sufficient financial resources. Besides occupational courses, elderly people wished to participate in other types of training that was more adapted to their needs, such as language courses, using ICTs for communication, photography, life histories, etc.

The facilitators are a fundamental element of the experiences. They must work throughout the process accompanying the adults. From when they detect the training needs to end product, the facilitators motivate and must encourage participation and drive new projects based on local interests.

Course certification was not always given; however, often it can help increase participants' motivation.

6. ASPECTS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE (Barcelona, October 2007)

The final conference of the Living Memory project, held in Barcelona at the end of October, gave the opportunity to present the results obtained from the experiences and knowledge on digital literacy of people over 50 years of age in European rural areas⁵

The MEVA project was presented, more specifically in Report I – General Framework Concerning Digital Literacy for People over 50 years of age in European Rural Areas, and Report II – Methodologies in Learning Information and Communication Technologies for Adults in Rural European Areas, together with the project evaluation report. A representative from each member country presented a summary of the experiences identified.

The most relevant aspects dealt with by the different speakers [José Manuel Pérex Tornero, expert in e-Learning. Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB); Paco Prieto, director of the Information Society Area, Fundació CTIC. Asturias (Spain); Rolf Carlsson, consultant in SeniorNet Roslagen. Norrtälje (Sweden); Dimistrios Doukas, technician in SZF. Fohnsdorf (Austria); Narcís Vives, expert in Information and Communication Technologies, Catalonia (Spain)] were the following:

As regards the current context, it confirmed that we find ourselves in a phase of media social production, in which digital literacy is a cultural phenomenon. The challenge is how to continue along this path and overcome the obstacles that

⁵ International Conference Programme Living Memory 2007[on-line] [Consulted on 11 December 2007] Available at: <http://www.living-memory.net/docsBiblioteca/carpeta330/Programa_ENG.pdf> and various conference documentation [on-line] [Consulted 11 December 2007] Available: <<http://www.living-memory.net/SvBibliotecaReg>>

emerge. ICTs can help us to overcome these barriers in space and time, yet they can create knowledge barriers.

The key concepts in digital and media literacy were highlighted as being:

- Development in critical thought
- The process of participation and active citizenship
- The convergence of the media (the majority being practically digital)
- Communicative competencies (the appearance of new forms of multimedia communication etc.)
- Changes in social organisation

It highlighted cultural differences between the countries as regards concepts and terms used in the project, just like the first report suggested. For example, the definition of an “elderly” person, i.e. the limit for adult persons over 50 years of age, etc.

It was found that in order for the project and all the experiences to be successful and continue to work in the future, they need to have an impact on a political level, in such a way that it favours this type of learning process.

The experiences presented from Sweden helped to illustrate the diversity in digital literacy for older people. One of the main characteristics of some of the associations such as SeniorNet is that the trainers themselves are volunteers. Extremely innovative projects were found (Västervik Project, Living Lab), that worked with people who lived in residential homes, focusing on the daily activities of the participants such as paying bills, shopping, etc.

In Austria, the emphasis was placed on the increasing older population, coinciding with the appearance and popularity of new technologies that have changed people’s lives.

In Poland, four experiences were analysed from a participant’s point of view, describing their impressions of the Information and Communication Technologies learning process.

The projects presented in Catalonia and other Autonomous Communities in Spain dealt with improving key competencies of the citizens, enabling them to be more independent in the future. All the experiences selected used ICTs as a learning tool.

The need to make adult persons over 50 aware of and participate in digital literacy projects is becoming more and more evident, since it is essential that this part of the population becomes involved in the information society. The aim is that the largest number possible becomes part of this new society.

Telecentres are seen as new social meeting points. The experiences use daily activities (shopping, paperwork, etc.) and virtual contact with the Public Administration as a starting point.

The methodology has changed, leaving the traditional workshops aside, to focus on the participants' interests and has ended up creating a project which often has an end product, resulting from a combined effort by all the users. In spite of all this, it is essential that we reflect on what people over 50 really want and the purpose for which they want to use ICTs.

We suggest the "e+50" model: people over 50 years of age that are capable of mastering ICTs and using them successfully in their daily personal or professional lives.

Our ultimate goal is to achieve digital competence.

Several round-tables were held where digital literacy projects were looked at from different perspectives and view points: project directors or coordinators, participants and experience facilitators.

- In general, there is a broader range of courses on offer.
- Participants are fully involved in the collective projects.
- The facilitators are a fundamental element of the telecentres.

As a supplement to the conferences and round-tables, an exhibition was held as a space for virtual presentations, by using posters or didactic material, to disseminate the different experiences.

The conference also spoke about the European Network for Digital Literacy, and the event came to an end with conclusions presented by Lluís Baixeras, coordinator of the MEVA project from the Education Services of Barcelona Provincial Council and Isabel Barón Palacio, head of Education Services. Barcelona Provisional Council.

7. CONCLUSIONS⁶

Accessibility to the network in rural areas is becoming easier. In this sense, the adult population over 50 years of age has a greater possibility of accessing ICT technologies. The ease of establishing networks and communities among the population can contribute to improving aspects related to training, communication, loneliness, assistance, etc. In short, it is important that we establish the communication channels and networks that will improve accessibility.

The *Living Memory* project has allowed us to take a first 'x-ray' of the current situation, of the needs and types of methodologies being used. We need to make the results known and maintain a community alive which will allow local entities, associations and other public and private initiatives to start, develop and improve projects in this area.

The required skills for adults over 50 years of age are not just a question of techniques or methodology; they are a question of democracy and inclusion. We must recognise that the objectives established in Europe for 2010 will not be reached. We need to reflect on an economic model based on a society of knowledge, a society of cooperation. It is not just about an instrumental aspect, but also a cultural aspect. The experiences analysed show the importance of incorporating ICTs into the daily lives of adult persons. It is not just about delivering IT literacy but acquiring the necessary digital competencies in order to live independently in today's society. In Europe, a large proportion of the population is made up of elderly and retired people who should not be excluded from society. Daily life, communication and finding information are based on ICTs; their lack of knowledge means that this part of the population could be excluded from democratic society.

ICT centres must be centres for learning, where people can improve their personal, social and employment-related competences and allow them to become more independent.

It is vitally important that information about these centres is disseminated and that the centres themselves are brought closer to the citizens.

The methodologies must respond to needs, interests and motivations of the people involved.

⁶ Some details have been taken from the Evaluation Report of the Project. For more detailed information, please consult: Träskelin, E. (2007). "Evaluation Report. October 2007 "Living Memory" "MEVA" E-Learning Project- DG EAC/23/05 Nova Distance GEMS AB" [on-line] [Consulted 11 December 2007) Available at: http://www.livingmemory.net/docsBiblioteca/carpeta320/20071128Final_Evaluation_Report_ENG.pdf >

The facilitators have an extremely important role in the different projects mentioned. The facilitator must have a profile which involves: basic ICT capabilities, empathy, ability to listen knowing the different ways of learning, and ability to deal with the diversity of the users on an individual and group basis.

It is important to have methodologies, certifications and to develop capabilities for facilitators and users. We need to prevent older people from being excluded in their daily life within a democratic process. Access for adults over 50 years old in rural areas to ICTs is increasing.

At an internal level between partners, various management meetings were held at each trans-national meeting and contact was maintained via e-mail, Skype and telephone, and by using a communication network created on the MEVA project web during the autumn of 2006. The network has been continuously improved and was developed during summer 2007. The website provides internal and external sections with a library, a forum and links page, etc.

We have also drawn up two reports: Report I “General Framework Concerning Digital Literacy for People over 50 years of age in European Rural Areas” and Report II, October 2007, “Methodologies in Learning Information and Communication Technologies for Adults in Rural European Areas”.

To disseminate the results of the project, various conferences/seminars/workshops were held at local and international levels to coordinate the project between partners and other participants. In addition, a brochure on “Bring Information and Communication Technologies to Adult Persons”⁷ and three posters (one international, one local and a poster with the objectives) were created.

Apart from the project conferences, the project team participated in International conferences and meetings held by the Directorate General of Education and Culture of the European Commission in Helsinki, Finland on the 3-4 July 2006, and in Brussels, Belgium on 5 March 2007.

International meetings organised by the Barcelona Provincial Council were held in Callús and Barcelona during the month of November, Radom on 21-22 May 2007 and the Final Conference in Barcelona, 29-30 October 2007.

In addition, various meetings were held at national and regional level organised by each partner in their own country. In Austria, various meetings were held with external experts in the field of education for adults, especially those related to ICTs. A training course which looked at the best practice methodology of the project, and a regional seminar were also held where a number of politicians, adult education institutions, and senior citizen organisations participated. Five

⁷ Dissemination brochure “Bringing Information and Communication Technologies to Adult Persons” ” [on-line] [Consulted 11 December 2007) Available at:< http://www.living-memory.net/docsBiblioteca/carpeta271/MEVA_Brochure_ENG.pdf>

conferences have been held on the project: training for elderly people, life-long learning, best practice experiences, historical memory workshops for the elderly and how to motivate the elderly.

The partner in Poland organised an international meeting in Romania (Galati) within the Socrates-Minerva project (European education programme using multimedia and information technologies); one in France (Paris) within the EMCET project (European Bank for the Development of Modular Curricular and Educational Technologies); discussions with the expert in E-learning, John Konrad; an international meeting with local authorities; debates on ICT learning methods for adults over 50 years of age in rural areas; a local seminar “Methodological assumptions of the preliminary course, integrated by adults within the information and communication technologies”; created by the University for Senior Citizens in Zwolle; a local seminar promoting digital technologies for adults and an ICT course for adults.

Sweden has held meetings with experts, project directors and with the chairman of the PRO board, with project directors for Kalmar’s county on IT strategy and investment, with members of SeniorNet, dissemination meetings with Åbo Akademi University, regional seminars with participants of the Regional Council of Kalmar and representatives of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Spain formed part of a “local team” in which the following institutions participated: Fundació Aplicació de Callús, Biblioteca Cal Gallifa de Sant Joan de Vilatorrada, Centre de Tecnologies de la Informació i la Comunicació. Vilafranca Virtual. Vilafranca del Penedès, Local consortium for the development of telecommunication and new technologies networks (Localret), Espais Telemàtics, Institut de les Ciències de l’Educació and the Education Area of the Barcelona Provincial Council. Two local seminars were held, one in 2006 in Barcelona, and the second in 2007 in Vilafranca del Penedes. On 26 June 2007, the Regional Seminar was held in the Education Area’s building of the Barcelona Provincial Council. Representatives attended from the Education Departments of local governments as well as individuals associated with adult education centres. No seminar was held at national level, but the team has travelled to various regions throughout Spain to visit experts and determine best practices, and some have participated in the regional seminar by videoconference. Many attended the Final Conference in Barcelona.

There were difficulties in finding target groups to carry out analysis and tests in each country. The definition of the target group proved to be problematic during the first part of the project. The different structures and traditions of the different countries only made the job more difficult.

The issues raised by the project stimulated debate and have been noted by politicians and decision-makers.

Several “best practices” have been identified, and some in particular, where we can see common results and an interest in all countries, are very important for transferability. Among these best practices, we have found the following

examples: the Callús project in Catalonia –one of the common success factors– a cultural- and historical-based starting point which motivated learners in a special way and gave optimum results. This “best practice” has already been introduced in other towns in Spain and other countries. The highly elaborate methodology from the Austrian partners has inspired and influenced the partner countries in how to teach the elderly⁸.

The Polish and Swedish experiences of groups of elderly people helping each other and taking on their own responsibility was a positive injection in all partner countries. Older people became empowered. The elderly group consisted of many different groups of people. There were many resourceful people who were able to take responsibility and use their own initiative as teachers, trainers, mentors and tutors.

The Swedish diversity in adult learning and the opportunities for older people to learn ICT will be a good model for new initiatives in other countries. In addition, the Swedish project for very old people in residential homes or those coming to day-activity centres using the computers together with staff was inspiring and promising.

The project has identified abilities and essential skills, as well as didactic tools required to support ICT-learning for old people, and it has shown a range of “best practices”, methods and solutions and documented them. The exchange of experiences has been stimulating, but also somewhat difficult because of the differences in systems, structures, cultures and “traditions” found in the different countries. The question for Europe’s tomorrow is not just how to solve these questions in a project-based way; it will need major investments and innovative strategies taken on political levels in the different regions in Europe. The project has contributed to this tomorrow by showing ways that are accessible. Implementing this knowledge will save money and shorten the time to carry out good actions. In the final seminar in Barcelona, there was a presentation from a rural area in Sweden, the Kalmar region, which has taken strategic steps to implement IT for everyone in a big, largely rural region. The initiative included very old people (80+), in very innovative ways. We hope that it will support and stimulate the politicians and decision-makers as well as the European Commission.

The question is how to disseminate and how to implement “best practice”, new methods and good ideas in a sustainable way and how to involve the politicians and those who make the decisions. Each of the countries has a very different infrastructure, different traditions and different opinions about the importance of ICT-literacy, all based on priorities and limited recourses. This question has been the main issue in the last evaluation questionnaire. The partners analysed the possibilities at three different target levels: the political side, the managers and the teachers/trainers. The most important part which we have to strive to convince seems to be the political level (because it is very much a democratic, strategic and economic issue) but it is also probably the most difficult to influence. Some of the partners have power to make changes, such as the Education Department of the Barcelona Provincial Council, which is a public

⁸ See document from Wedenhin, W (2007) [on-line] [Consulted on 11 December 2007] Available at: <http://www.living-memory.net/docsBiblioteca/carpeta334/Summary_projects_Austria.pdf>

administration with the task of supporting 311 local governments in the Barcelona province. The Austrian partner doesn't have this opportunity at all. Poland, represented by a National Research Institute has a high prestige and a lot of contacts. Nova Distance is a small company but has an unusually broad network in Sweden, built up over many years when three of the owners were deeply involved in the development of Swedish adult education.

Each of the partners has been very active and has carried out ambitious dissemination activities. There is a wide range of ways in which the ideas and methods can be spread; ideas that have been tested and documented in each of our countries. The best guarantee for good sustainability has been the wide range of successful dissemination responses. We believe that the decision to implement the ideas presented has to be taken at the political level, especially when we are talking about rural areas. To disseminate ideas in urban areas, where the personal contacts, e.g. between managers, are more common would be an easier task.

We believe that the results are useful. Some uncertainty was demonstrated about the teacher/trainer level indicating that they are reluctant to change, that they need a curriculum and will not accept "Bottom-up" methodology. However, we will attest to the results and will continue to make them known, to work for sustainability, to stimulate and interest the participants and experts.

When comparing the project aims, target group and goals as well as the results, it is clear to see that the MEVA project falls perfectly in line with the "Recommendations of the European Parliament and of the Council" released on 18 December 2006 on key competences for life-long learning.

The project's main focus has been those objectives stated in the life-long learning framework for older people. The results of our project will be available for transfer and copying by other member states and the documentation will also constitute a small part of a reference tool on European level for policy makers, education providers, employers, and learners themselves to facilitate national and European efforts towards commonly-agreed goals.

In spite of the MEVA project being run by a very small group of partners handling a very large issue, getting real penetration on a large scale will be difficult. The solutions need to be country-based issues, solved by extensive initiatives at municipality or regional level.

We hope that the European Commission will point out and emphasise the need for IT-literacy for the elderly to the member countries and support the economic investments that are essential in achieving good results. A good beginning might be the objectives for the Structural and Social Fund 2007-2013 since one of the large areas earmarked for economic support is excluded groups. Nonetheless, changing priorities to focus on old people is a big step. It will be hard to defend old people and to defend their rights against all other groups where a more direct economic feed-back can be seen. To stand up for old people will be another step in the work to further influence the politicians and decision-makers in each small municipality. Unfortunately, I have doubts about

the possibilities of achieving a real impact on these issues during the next period of the Structural and Social Fund. In Sweden, there is already diversity. It is possible (via the main organisations) to have an impact on the methodology that is already in use by e.g. the SeniorNet and in Popular Adult Education, however it will not be easy in many other European countries without major support from the European Commission.

Older people are a resource themselves and they have a lot of resourceful people within their own group. It is their human right and a prerequisite for a democratic society to be offered ICT training, without implying high individual costs. Old people will not be excluded in a democratic society. The solution is not to influence one or other institution or training centre to develop their methods and to start training old people. Starting a series of activities on a project basis is not the solution.

The MEVA project simply provides good examples and new methodologies and the basic skills needed to fulfil the task. Nonetheless, strategic plans and activities are needed and probably, a law.

We also need a diversity of activities and actors. We need to find everything from ordinary courses with curricula to individual-based training with adequate personal guidance and support. We need to work with motivation, with visiting activities and of course with “Bottom-up” methodologies as we have shown in this project.

If this project stimulates a new impulse and the desire of the various partners to promote these projects using the European Network for Digital Literacy, we can see it as an extremely positive step.